

## A Contrastive Linguistic Analysis of Narratives in Arabic and English

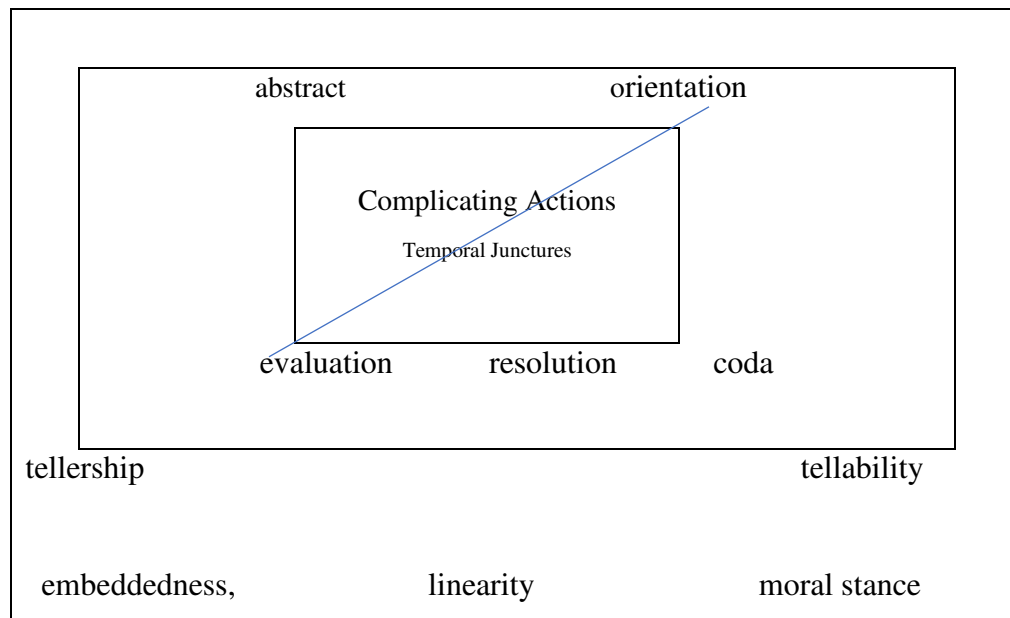
This research paper investigates twenty narratives narrated by participants of different languages (Arabic and English): ten participants who speak Arabic and ten participants who speak English. The data was collected from some websites and YouTube. They narrated frightening and emotionally complex events orally that they experienced at one stage in their life. To investigate narrative structures more in-depth, this study employed a mix of frameworks to analyze these narratives collected in this study: Ochs's and Capps's (2001) narrative dimensions (tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, moral stance) and Labov's and Waletzky's 1967 structural approach of narratives involving six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. This study argues that these two approaches of analysis complement each other. That is to say, Ochs' and Capps's approach (2001) examines narrative content (e.g., the significance of events). But Labov's and Waletzky's approach (1967) focuses on the structural analysis of narratives. This study aims to investigate if speakers of different languages can produce fully developed narratives, involving abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda and if Ochs's and Capps's (2001) narrative dimensions (tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity, moral stance) can contribute to facilitating the presence of these elements, and therefore help speakers of different languages. The study found that the tellership, tellability, detachedness, and linearity of the narratives analyzed for this paper play an important role in creating and enriching narratives with all these six elements: abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda.

This study found that while narratives in English focus on complicating action and evaluations, narratives in Arabic involve orientation and complicating action. However, complicating action is the predominant feature of narratives in both languages. This study also found that English speakers used more explicit junctures (e.g., but and so) than their Arabic counterparts.

The narratives analyzed in this paper ranged from maximal (having six elements) to minimal narratives (having less than six elements) based on the criterion set up, which is whether they have six elements or not. The findings revealed while both groups (English and Arabic speakers) can produce fully developed narratives, the difference between them was statistically significant. That is, English speakers produce more fully developed narratives than their Arabic counterparts.

The study also found that narrative dimensions (tellership, tellability, detachedness, linearity) can enrich narratives with (implicit and explicit) temporal junctures. These junctures in turn can help produce more fully developed narratives.

Figure 1: Six narrative elements and complicating action as a central part



I proposed this model to reveal the relationship between narrative content, including the five dimensions (tellership, tellability, embeddedness, linearity and moral stance) and narrative structure that comprises abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution and coda. Complicating action appears as a basic component of narratives, as shown in this model. Orientation and evaluation are the most commonly used between Arabic and English, however, the availability of these elements depends on the narrative dimensions: when they are all available, the more likely (all or most of) these elements exist in a narrative. Temporal junctures, which can be stated either implicitly or explicitly, are a key to complicating actions which in turn are a key to narratives.

This study bears important teaching implications: students should learn using junctures (e.g., but) properly. These junctures, which are of explicit and implicit type, nucleus to forming narratives.

Keywords: complicating actions, contrastive analysis, temporal Junctures, narratives

References:

Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative Analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of narrative and life history*, 7(1-4),3-38.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Harvard University Press.

